



University of Tennessee, Knoxville

TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange

Chancellor's Honors Program Projects

Supervised Undergraduate Student Research
and Creative Work

5-2014

Restoring the Harmony of Humanity and Science

Simone Ilia Ms.
silia@utk.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_chanhonoproj

 Part of the [Fiction Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ilia, Simone Ms., "Restoring the Harmony of Humanity and Science" (2014). *Chancellor's Honors Program Projects*.
https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_chanhonoproj/1709

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Supervised Undergraduate Student Research and Creative Work at TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Chancellor's Honors Program Projects by an authorized administrator of TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact trace@utk.edu.

Restoring the Harmony of Humanity and Science

Scientific
inspirations of
literature and poetry

Honors Thesis Project
May 2014

Simone Ilia

The Story

Sacrifice

Sunny days only intensified the pain of the reality Daniel faced. Daniel's bones rigidly held his body up as his heart beat softly behind his frail chest. He grimaced as he sat on the back porch of his beach house as the tides beat the sand ruthlessly. Florida claimed to be the one place in the world that people can be at peace, but the yellow sun and baby blue skies weren't enough to ease his troubles. White lab coats, numbers, chemicals, goggles, experiments, and long hours after hours composed the majority of this man's life. Every human being who didn't really know Daniel loved him. They didn't understand.

Daniel sat down by the large window that captured the sea. Even though Florida was always smiling when he wanted to cry, he did love the sea. For a long time, he had felt like the entire world held him up like a god or a king. Now he spent most of his days watching the ocean which reminded him that he was a man that stood no stronger to any wave than the next man. He didn't like fame anymore.

Daniel closed his eyes as the sun glared off of the sea blinding him. He struggled to keep his eyelids from drooping because his mind never stopped jetting through thoughts and worries of his troubling past. He tried to blink away the impending sleep but it came like a crashing wave. He reluctantly felt himself being washed away into darkness.



"Daniel!" Jeremy yelled as he swung higher and higher into the air.

"What?" Daniel answered as he fumbled in the saw dust for his glasses on the playground at Pike Elementary.

Jeremy stretched his Velcro shoes to the sky before he soared over Daniel and landed on the grass with two feet. Daniel watched him with envious awe.

“Wasn’t that awesome?!” Jeremy said while straightening himself up to seem taller.

“Yeah, that was pretty cool,” Daniel mumbled. He was taking 8th grade math in 2nd grade but couldn’t stay on a swing for longer than 8 seconds.

Jeremy didn’t seem to register the bitterness in his friend’s voice as he proceeded to pick up Daniel’s glasses and help him up. His baby blues shined with excitement, and Daniel knew another “awesome” idea was about to come out of that mouth.

“Hey Daniel, let me teach you how to jump! It’s so much fun and I’ll swing beside you so I can show you how!”

Daniel readjusted his glasses and looked questionably at his friend. He wanted to leap effortlessly and imitate one of the acrobats his grandmother took him to see that summer. At the semi-affirmative gesture, Jeremy grabbed Daniel’s arm and dragged him to the swing set.

“Let’s go!”

Daniel held the chains of the swing so tightly that his little knuckles were turning white. “I can do this, I can do this.” He repeated this approximately a thousand times to prepare for his performance.

“OK, stay with me in swings,” Jeremy instructed.

“OK.”

“Forward, back, forward, back.”

Daniel began to laugh with excitement. “I’m doing it!” he exclaimed.

“OK, Danny, now jump, like this!” Jeremy jumped and nailed his landing, as usual.

Daniel swung back one more time. He looked ahead at the bright sky and the other 2nd graders that had gathered to witness the spectacle of scrawny Daniel making a leap for nerdy kids everywhere. This was his moment, and he knew it. As he swung forward, he released a warrior-like roar of pride and freed his grip from the swing. His classmates looked like ants underneath him as he attempted to climb higher into the sky. He almost believed he was flying.

“Daniel,” Jeremy yelled frantically, “Don’t forget the landing!”

Daniel suddenly snapped back into real time and realized the ground was rapidly approaching. He flailed his arms and legs wildly. The crowd began to dissociate into a hollow circle to avoid being hit by an uncoordinated child. Daniel braced himself for doom.

Snap!

The entire playground was completely silent for a whole tenth of a second.

“AHHHH!” Daniel screamed in agony as he clutched his leg.

Before he could understand what had happened, the ambulance was taking Daniel to the hospital. Once he arrived the doctor gave Daniel a shot to ease the pain and casted his leg. He watched and sat in amazement as the doctor methodically wrapped his leg and the pain melted

away from his body. His mother held his hand with more anguish on her face than Daniel had ever seen. He didn't understand why; the experience was inspiring.

~~~

The summer following that school year provided plenty of troubles for Daniel and his family.

Everyday, beginning June 1, Daniel's mother would take him to the hospital while his grandmother would get her cancer treatments. He watched her suffer with his mom.

"Momma," Daniel would start almost every day.

"Yes, Daniel," she would reply every time.

"Why can't they fix Gramma like they fixed me? Why can't they just wrap her up or give her medicine, Momma?"

"I don't know. Sometimes doctors can fix people and other times it's all in God's hands. All we can do is pray."

Daniel never liked this answer. "I bet I could fix her, Momma." Daniel felt his heart sink every time he saw his weary mother smile sadly and look away.

Daniel attended his first funeral that year. He sat stiffly in his new suit and wooden pew. He vaguely remembered the preacher saying something about a new life and other people saying nice things about his grandmother, however, his entire focus was on the corpse lying in the

coffin. He apologized quietly to her behind his tears, “I’m sorry, Gramma. I won’t let it happen again.”



Daniel opened his eyes to find the moon and stars illuminating the sky. He estimated that he had been asleep for 6 hours. *Daniel, you’re an old man. You can’t be napping in rocking chairs.*

He rose and felt his back and joints pop like a bundle of balloons floating into a thorny rose bush. He turned his fragile back to the window and walked toward his bed where he found his now cold dinner waiting for him on the night stand. He poked his fork at the mysterious meat on the tray and sighed as he picked up the roll. One would think the doctors and nurses would treat him better since he was paying for everything himself. His mouth watered as he recalled the savory Salisbury steaks and wholesome mashed potatoes that his lovely wife would make for him. The room spun and he choked on the lump in his throat. He tried to stop it but the recollection was too strong. He felt himself falling back in time once again.



“Daniel, honey, dinner’s ready!” Sarah called endearingly, her full dark hair bouncing in harmony with her excitement.

They had been married for one year now and life couldn’t be grander. Daniel had been accepted into the medical school at Harvard after attending Stanford with Sarah where he received a degree in Biomedical Engineering.



Sarah, in contrast, studied elementary education and child psychology. Daniel would discuss recent findings in medicine on their dates as if she were part of his field. He knew he intimidated her a bit, but Sarah had the ability to love anyone. Whether this was good or bad, it didn't matter, because despite his quirky, nerdy personality, she liked him.

Daniel proposed to her in the library during finals the spring of junior year. He had never been known as the romantic type. Sarah erupted with so much joy that she proceeded to tell the entire library what had just happened, the majority of them strangers. She was so eager, in fact, that the librarian kindly escorted them out of the library personally and banned them for the rest of the semester. Despite the matter, Daniel was euphoric; he never imagined that he would get to spend the rest of his life with someone as wonderful as her.

The wedding was small. They got married over the summer in California. Jeremy, Sarah's parents and even Daniel's parents came to witness. It was the first and only time his father said he was proud of him, and his mother hugged and kissed her son as if he had just won the lottery. They danced under the moonlight in the sand and promised to love each other forever and ever.

As the years went on, Daniel became more and more involved with his work. Daniel received many award and honors from Harvard for all of his researched in terminal diseases. "The possibilities for medicine are endless. We have to stop acting like they are finite." He would say this at nearly all his lectures and presentations. He had always been passionate for medicine, but passion quickly turned into obsession.

Although his status in the scientific community rose like the mighty pyramids, his home life plummeted into the Dead Sea after 15 years and a son. Day after day, Sarah and Daniel came closer to hitting the ground of their love for each other, due highly to the fact that Daniel hardly cared about what happened to his family anymore. Soccer games and family dinners consisted of Sarah and Michael present and Daniel present in a lab. Even as his family disintegrated like methane in organic solvents, Daniel was as unaffected as oil in water.

“Daniel,” Sarah said wearily, “Please remember to pick up your son from school today.”

“Sarah, please, you work at the school. It would be silly of me to go all the way to school when you’re there. I’ll spend time with him after work, but I may be late. I think I’m onto a breakthrough.”

Daniel looked up from his oatmeal and was stunned to find his wife in raging tears.

“I told you I have parent teacher conferences today! And you are always on a breakthrough, but you never seem to have time to see your son. When was the last time you came home before 10 p.m.? I don’t even remember and your memory is even less reliable. I can’t keep being your keeper, Daniel! We’re leaving, Daniel. We’re not coming back.”

“Sarah, I understand you’re upset, but let’s not be rash, okay? We’ve been through rough times before.”

“Like any couple, sure. And every time you’ve said you’ll change, and every time it has gotten worse. I can’t do it anymore, Daniel. I have to think of my son.” Little Michael was peeking through the kitchen door now with full rosy cheeks shining with tears.

Sarah scooped up her son and looked at Daniel. He ran his fingers through his graying hair and sighed.

“Sarah, I’m just trying to help people. Don’t you understand? My work is demanding now but soon it will be worth it. Don’t be selfish.”

Daniel didn’t realize this was the wrong thing to say at the moment. Sarah’s face filled with blood.

“Daniel, consider me gone. But consider this too, you’ll spend your whole life working for something that may or may not even happen. You’re just trying to save the world and by trying, you’ll lose yourself. We’re all going to die, someday. You can’t stop that.”

Daniel remembered what she said everyday but didn’t process it for a long time. He watched her pack up her belongings and take their child away. He watched her closely; he noticed the lines on her face, the strands of silver spiraling through her dark braid, and the tears that made her crystal eyes glisten. He watched her like she was another specimen in his lab, analyzing her and the situation with complete objectivity. This is why he didn’t chase her when she walked away. He didn’t even have enough empathy to try and restore his family. The man that would soon be known as the greatest humanitarian of all time had no humanity left at all.



Daniel woke up to a glaring sun once again. *Stupid nurses*, he thought, *Can’t they understand that I close those blinds for a reason?*

At eight in the morning, the nurse came to give Daniel his medicine for the day.

“How are you, Dr. Richards?”

“I’m alright, Ann, I’m okay.”

“Glad to hear it.” She laid out a colorful array of pills on his breakfast tray.

“Two duloxetine today, Ann? There’s no need for that.”

Ann smiled nervously, “You’ve been down lately, and the doctor wanted to make sure you were okay.”

“Ann, I don’t know if you know this, but I’m a doctor. And I know I’m fine. I’m locked up here, and you want me to be merry? I apologize for being human.”

“It’s not up to me, Doctor,” she said timidly.

He knew she knew his history, attempted suicide, or at least that’s what they called it. But the truth was that he really wasn’t crazy. He didn’t want to die; he just didn’t want to continue living the life he was living.

He met with the counselor and told him everything he wanted to hear, and then he had the afternoon to himself.

He sat in his usual chair by the window watching the waves reaching for the shore and then retracting back into the waves. He sat with tension in every muscle that he literally had trouble breathing. He tried so hard to repress the past from creeping into his perfect bubble that he had created for himself, but they had consumed him for so long that he could no longer run away.



Daniel was sitting in his lab alone. He was in his fifties now and didn't notice his limited interaction with people anymore. He felt like he was searching for oxygen in a black hole most of the time, but he persisted in his research. He often thought of Sarah and Michael, but he never tried to find them or reconcile. He didn't know them or his parents anymore. All he knew was cancer, and he knew it like it was the love of his life.

Like clockwork, he recalled. Cells regenerate to compensate for cells lost in a controllable manner. Cancer, conversely, regenerates in a manner that is uncontrolled. If a person finds that they have cancer soon enough, they can receive radiation and kill the cells. The only problem with this is that if one cancer cell survives, then the patient is doomed to become sick again.

Daniel was looking for a real cure. His latest research was in genetic engineering. He labored on this for months and tried to manipulate a gene to restore the normal function of cell-cycle control genes to combat the destructive regenerative process of the mutated cancer gene.

"Today, on January 20, I will attempt to isolate and inhibit this strain of melanoma using this modified gene," he spoke into his tape recorder. He slid the sample underneath the microscope and waited. After nearly 14 hours, the gene became incorporated into the genome of the infected cell. He had successfully stopped uncontrollable cell growth. He had finally discovered a cure for cancer.

He sat in a shock. He had accomplished his life's dream, yet he felt little elation. He expected this moment to be like flying over the playground as a child or the moment he took

watched his lovely bride walk down the aisle. He ignored his confessions, as he had learned to do, and continued with his work.

Daniel concluded his research and presented a 500 page thesis on his work to the American Cancer Society. He had dreamed of this moment so many times that he thought he should be flying, but something was holding his elation back. He ignored his uneasiness and completely absorbed the experience.

In summary of his work, Daniel decided to break into the genetic code for the cure. Oncogenes are genes that cause cell division to proliferate, and tumor suppressor genes minimize cell growth and division. Any alteration in function in these genes can cause uncontrolled cell growth causing tumors, or cancer.

These genes control cell division by creating the proteins involved in the process. Daniel knew that he needed to create a super-gene that was immune to these mutations. By studying people who are more susceptible to cancer versus those who aren't, Daniel was able to create the perfect gene to end cancer. This super-gene proved to produce the most stable proteins involved in the cell-cycle control genes. Through his life, he created a cure for all stages of cancer.

Daniel's recognition exploded within days around the world. He was speaking at a lecture in a different city every day, and he was showered with praise and love. He thought about Sarah and Michael still, but they had hidden themselves from him well enough that he could enjoy his spotlight.

The next year, he received the Nobel Peace Prize. He puffed with pride as he stepped on that stage and accepted his award. He smiled graciously as the man introduced him kindly as “The humanitarian of the millennium.” He rose to accept his prize with these words:

“Fellow humans, today we have defeated our greatest enemy for as long as our history can remember. Our pursuit for long and happy lives is closer now than it has ever been. Today, we can wipe the pain away, for we know a better future is coming. Today, we are survivors.”

The crowd roared and Daniel soaked in the glory. He knew this moment was bigger than him, but he desired the recognition. He didn’t realize he had thirsted for this admiration and love so much.

Daniel couldn’t walk two blocks from his home without getting stopped.

“Dr. Richards, what are you doing here?” a girl gasped as he walked to the market for something to eat one day.

“Taking a break; I live here,” he would reply to these fans.

“Could I have your autograph?” she asked with the biggest eyes he’d ever seen anyone make.

This happened for the next few years, but Daniel never rejected it. It would have continued, too, if he hadn’t received that call on January 20, exactly 5 years after he had made the biggest discovery known to mankind yet.

“Daniel, sit down,” his mother said softly. It had been years since he had heard from her, so he knew the news couldn’t be good.

Daniel sat with dread.

“Sarah passed away today in a car accident,” she said.

Daniel hung up the phone. She was dead. He realized that he had rested his hope in reconciled with Sarah one day, and now that hope was gone. And what would happen to Michael, he thought. By then, he was at least in college. He couldn’t handle the world crumbling underneath his feet and the emotions attempting to penetrate his heart, so he devised a plan for escape.



In less than 24 hours, Daniel found himself 1,450 feet above the city of Chicago. He smiled with a wild look in his eyes and dark intentions in his heart.

He turned to face the employees of the building and the emergency personnel that had congregated awkwardly and dangerously around him.

“Daniel, don’t do it, please.”

“I won’t jump, don’t worry,” Daniel said with a smirk. Behind him there was a fire truck and an ambulance and plenty of police.

“Doctor, please.”



On the inside he was grinning widely but on the outside he roared violently as he ran towards them, “I said I’m not!” As Daniel ran towards the people and police, the police officer tased him on the spot. His body collapsed like a rag doll on the roof of the Sears Tower.

He woke up in an asylum and when he was tried for attempted suicide he pleaded insanity. His only request was the he could live in his own private facility in the Sunshine State.

This is what brought him to the rocking chair that has become his prison. This caused his constant struggle to hide his love and loss.

But all of a sudden, for the first time since his grandmother passed away, Daniel began to weep. His entire body quaked with motion as his muscles released their tension and the tears came more fiercely than the highest tides he’d ever seen. He mourned his family, he mourned his wife, and he mourned his life. He didn’t know his son, his parents turned against him since the divorce, and his lovely Sarah was gone forever. He finally took her words to heart that his whole life would be in vain. *Is it really worth it to save the whole world if you lose your own world?* He finally allowed himself to wrestle with these transgressions.

He wept for days and days. The doctors and nurses tried to help, but he insisted to be alone. Shadows took over his dreams and his days darkened still. He survived only by food and water now.

On a particularly cloudy day for Florida, Ann, the nurse, walked into his door around 10:37 with a beaming smile on her face. He accustomed himself to their meticulous schedule, so he jumped when she peeked inside.

“Doctor, I have a visitor for you!”

Daniel froze at the word. Visitor? No one cared about this mad scientist enough to visit him.

A tall, handsome man with rosy cheeks and a small, blonde woman with a bundle of blankets walking close beside him entered the room. As he walked closer he saw those crystal eyes. He knew those eyes.

“Michael?” Daniel voice cracked as he had not spoken much for days.

The man’s eyes welled with tears as he embraced his estranged father’s neck.

“Mr. Richards, Dad?” He shifted from one foot to the other, and then back again. “I just had to come, I’m sorry if you don’t want to see me. But I need you to know that I have hated you my whole life.”

Daniel knew this. He had accepted it a long time ago. However, knowledge didn’t stop pain anymore for Daniel.

“I watched what you did to mom her whole life. She prayed for you every night but she also prayed to God that she would forgive you. She had to pray that prayer every night. But mom was a special person, and I didn’t want to forgive you. So I didn’t.”

Michael looked down and away from his father. Daniel stood patiently, silently inviting Michael to continue.

And Michael began to cry. “But, Dad, Mom is gone now. Mom is gone and you hurt her but she still tried. You hurt me too but I didn’t know you. Dad, I don’t want to hate you anymore.” He choked out the last part of his sentence.

“So I’m here Dad, and I just need you to know that I forgive you. I may have to forgive you again every day, but I am willing to.”

Daniel embraced his tear streaked son and let the tears of joy and relief stream down his face.

“I love you, son, I’m sorry I never showed it.”

“I know, Dad.”

Daniel allowed Michael to introduce him to Sophie, his wife. She bubbled with smiles and laughter and reminded him of Sarah.

“And who is this?” Daniel asked in his best baby voice.

“Mary,” Sophie said with pride and love.

Daniel held his granddaughter and studied her rosy face without the intention of finding something, but rather with the intention of losing his weakness in exchange for strength. In this sleeping infant’s face, Daniel let go of his guilty past for a future of hope.

The Richards’ stood by the window and watched the majestic waves and thunder and rain explode outside as they stood peacefully in the midst.

# The Poetry

And Yet

Everything is full of wonder,  
Or so I thought.  
Until a book comes along  
And takes the magic away.  
And sometimes I don't want to know  
How proteins fold,  
How oxidation makes us old,  
How a single cell can make a baby,  
And all the ways a virus can infect me.

Now instead I've discovered new regions of mystery:  
That somehow in the spaces of atoms  
There are living souls.  
That a deteriorating body  
Has the greatest capacity for wisdom  
That despite every step that can go wrong,  
Children are born.

## Eradication

An infection once took over me  
that I believe to be viral.

My diagnosis comes from the truth  
that you were nothing more

than a means to destroy me,  
and yet, I gave you all you needed

to survive. You entered into the  
most intimate spaces of my being

seeking only to exploit them,  
Seeing what still made me whole until,

I wasn't useful to you anymore.  
Even as my fever rose and I tried

to fight you off,  
you never stopped.

## Entropy

My worlds seem to crumble,  
But just beyond my sight are  
Wonders I cannot destroy.  
Just within me,  
The secrets of life  
Rigidly hold together.  
Oh what faith I have  
In these bonds,  
Telling more about me than anyone.  
Bonds stronger than any love  
I will ever know –  
Hydrogen.  
Suddenly, I am complex and marvelous,  
Constructed by a message  
That spirals into order.  
Like art, like a proclamation,  
I am not chaos after all.

## Twitch

Your neurons fire beautifully,  
Just so you know.  
Remember when mom yelled at you  
For breaking your leg.  
You were three.  
And I still think you were crazy  
For going swimming in November.  
It was 43 degrees.  
Still, your chaos is stunning  
The sun-kissed brown coils running  
Down your back tell us so.  
I didn't mean to cry when you lost control,  
When your seven-year-old body fell to the floor,  
When they whisked you away to a hospital bed,  
When they had to stick all those wires to your head.  
I'm sorry they described you like a machine.  
Your brain is not a circuit,  
You are not a thing.  
Sure, you're far from perfect,  
But I still think your neurons fire beautifully.



## Under Destruction

I know you're broken,  
But that shouldn't stop you.  
Let me just mention,  
The glucose that was in your sandwich today,  
Doesn't stop breaking until it reaches  
Some sub-atomic energy machine,  
So broken you can't even find the pieces.

But somehow that's what makes  
The muscles in your face  
Turn your smile.  
And that is a light I never want to let go.  
Don't be afraid of breaking, darling,  
It is the only beauty we know.

## Be Still

Stillness is an illusion,  
As the world rotates rapidly,  
We stand unassumingly  
As the molecules that make us  
Dance within us  
Trying to grab our attention  
Trying to make us see  
That life never stops moving  
It never stays the same.  
Even if we live to be 100 years old,  
We are new everyday.

## Burden of Reality

A memory haunts the mother,  
Gray streaks in her hair  
Like the gray raindrops from her eyes.

The memory cries out  
And she hears the screech halts  
Car tires and bright future.

The last of the wine on her lips,  
And for a moment,  
She pauses in reality.

As the blood absorbs,  
Her mind is free to travel time,  
Her body is a slave.

And the liver tries to make  
The toxins go away  
But she clings to her world.

The dusty memory  
Of a little girl  
That only comes alive  
When she's drowning.

## Skeleton

There are not many humans,  
But one.  
Only simple eyes look around,  
And see many.

Consider:  
Beneath the skin,  
Veins,  
Prejudice,  
Souls,  
We are all just bodies  
Standing on white stones.

If you hold a flower too tight you'll crush it

Hope is like the iron grip  
Of hemoglobin in the blood  
To the oxygen in the air.

Desperately it clings  
Tighter with each molecule of  $O_2$ .  
But the  $CO_2$  rises like poison in that instant,  
And the body realizes,  
It can't hold on forever:  
It must exhale.

And likewise to live,  
Sometimes you  
Must  
Let  
Go.

## Brainstorming

The writer aches over her desk,  
A pen rattling in her hand  
Like the earthquake she senses  
Shaking in her mind.  
A neuron synapses, the lightning  
Of her brainstorm, sending  
A thunder of thoughts in the heavy night clouds.  
Its inspiration comes like a rushing hurricane  
With no sound  
Erasing out the shadows  
To reveal the dream clouds.  
The ink in her pen is  
Like the rain of her thoughts.

## Infected

When I was in San Francisco I saw a man picking a yellow scab on the side of the road. And I thought of the infection, of the pus leaking out of his leg, how his body was trying so hard to fight but he was only feeding the enemy. His dirty hands digging through dumpsters only hours before, and all I can do is walk by and cringe as if I don't feed the infections inside of me. My American nature full of entitlement, I want my 6-figure job on a silver platter, agonizing over the choice for chicken or steak for lunch. Or how about the pride, that tells me to point up my nose and blacken my heart and says that I am cleaner than the man with the yellow scab on the street when I hardly even try to fight the filth inside of me.

## Picnic on the University Lawn

I tried to keep from loving you  
by finding your pulse as I held your hand.  
Over your head I watched the big clock tower  
so I counted as the beats passed.  
And I imagined the blood flowing  
from the left side of your body to the right,  
and I wondered about all the toxins that  
were being exchanged as it rushed through,  
Reminding myself you are not as perfect  
As you appear to be.

But once the blood rushed your cheeks  
They turned a rosy hue,  
As if my touch had done that to you,  
And again I found your eyes,  
The perfect shade of blue,  
So I lost count.



## Hidden Strength

Sugars have backbones,  
Made of hydrogen bonds,  
And now the joke's on him  
Cause they're the strongest ones.  
"You are too sweet,"  
He whispered in her ear.  
But it wasn't praise.  
And she didn't say a word,  
When her kindness was in vain.  
When she held the door open  
For a stranger in the rain,  
"Grow a backbone," he said.  
But now the joke's on him.  
Sugar might melt in the rain,  
But when the sunshine comes  
It will be solid again.

Father of two dies at home

He was burdened by the truth  
that office wouldn't raise his kids, but  
He chose not to listen.  
The moments would come and go,  
Like the first ballet,  
The championship game,  
Telling him to take it slow,  
But one thing he didn't know  
One day the pressure building on his heart  
Would stop him.

The boss said, "Don't listen to your heart,  
It only makes you lose."  
But each time he ignored it,  
The blood inside began  
To lose its pace through his veins.

Home from the office one day,  
The pressure had reached its max,  
And mid-embrace with his little girl,  
Is when he went under attack.

## Life Goals

I want to understand  
The sensory behind your eyes  
What your brain says about my hand  
As my fingers dance on the baby grand  
And what the sound implies.

I want to understand  
The reasons for your why's.  
The explanations you demand  
For the way the world withstands  
The actions of the unwise.

I want to understand  
The way disease applies  
To the plight of every man  
And how it truly can  
Prevent his demise.

## On different wavelengths

When I sang to you, I watched your eyes rise and fall,  
Like the sound waves traveling to your ear.  
And I could see those waves bounce  
Along the walls of the ear canal,  
Reaching some undefined region  
Of your mind making you smile.

Was the rushing tide of sweet-nothings  
Pleasant to your ears? A moment passed  
between the sound of my lips and the sound in  
your ear that changed the message beyond my  
control because you pushed me away and the  
shocks in your brain appeared on your face when  
all I asked was for you to stay.

The way you make art

You breathe in,  
And I think about the air  
That fills the Baby's Breath flowers  
Budding in your lungs.  
As I rest my head on your chest,  
I listen for the oxygen as it  
Is traded for carbon dioxide  
And it seems like you have  
Awakened the garden.  
The strawberries and the apple trees  
Come to life again  
As you breathe out.

For the Farmer

When I was a little girl  
My grandfather held my hand  
In an oasis in the desert  
And gave me bundles  
Of green chick peas to pop in my mouth  
On the family farm.

We didn't have many words  
To share out there in the sand.  
He kept to himself but we always  
Laughed about how the watermelon  
In Syria was way better than anything  
Americans could ever grow.

And when I found out that Jiddou  
Was finally part of the earth  
He so faithfully plowed, my words  
Weren't enough to describe how much  
It ached to have him uprooted from my life.

## An Endothermic Reaction

Don't look so confused  
And expect me to explain.  
I'm afraid of planting you in this day  
Only to uproot you in the next.  
I have no reasons  
For the twists in my stomach  
That turn into knots;  
For why my hands push you away  
When my face says come close.  
All I know  
Is I woke up so cold today,  
Like I spent all night  
Missing the warmth in your arms.

## Make-believe

My dentist told me not to drink coffee  
Since it would turn my teeth yellow:  
I drink it mindlessly.  
It's like the colors that aren't real,  
Caffeine messes with my senses  
So I don't notice the rush of the wind  
Or the beauty of the daisies in the field  
As the tension in my blood builds.  
It's like when I told my sister  
To go outside and look at the blue sky,  
And she told me that there were more  
Colors in the pixels of the TV screen.  
She didn't know they weren't real.  
And I wondered about the chat room  
On the Internet inside,  
We traded authenticity for comfort.  
Like I'd rather have yellow teeth  
Than get a good night's sleep  
And wake up early for a sunrise  
And see colors that might be real.



## Heart-mining

When my love left me, all I could do was  
Press down with my pencil hard,  
Filling the lines with anger and rage,  
And then I realized that just within the wood  
Was graphite.  
So with vengeance,  
I applied more and more pressure,  
And for a moment I saw precious  
Diamonds glisten on the page.

98.6 ° F

Being alive might hurt, but then we wonder  
If we are really living if it doesn't hurt  
Sometimes. While you're alive you learn to  
Hope, love, dance, sing, play, and laugh.  
While you're alive you learn to despair, hate,  
Fall, and cry. It's all part of being alive, and yet  
We run away and try to numb what we feel.  
Even Jesus wept, so why are we trying to  
Pretend like we can get away without being  
Sad. It's like the drugs that help us live like  
Drones. I think painkillers can kill you  
Because you need pain sometimes to remind  
Yourself that you're still alive.  
It's like your broken heart that isn't really  
Broken. And now that I know that pain is  
Part of the gift of life, I lie down at night when  
The world feels heavy on my heart and tears  
Roll down, I ask God why the world is so cruel  
Sometimes, and in that moment everything is real  
And it matters and I'm happy somehow.

## Carpe Diem

You have colors like a thousand sunsets,  
That you are afraid to show,  
Dear sister, let me remind you,  
From the moment you are born,  
You are dying.  
You are like a book  
With a front cover but no back,  
And once the story is through,  
You will join the rest on a rack.  
And likely only those who join us  
For the pages inside  
Will know exactly what you  
Meant to the world in your life.  
Stop treading the earth,  
And forgetting your song,  
Sing with the freedom of forever  
While your fate is sealed all along.

The Spanish Flu of 1918  
*Rendition of an old playground rhyme*

*I had a little bird  
And its name was Enza.  
I opened the window  
And in-flew-Enza.*

He never sent a warning,  
And he came swiftly through the air,  
I breathed him into my lungs  
And so he nested there.

Inside he dug in his claws,  
Along his beaten path,  
And within me now,  
I'm drowning in his wrath.

## Canvas

No matter what you say about the origins of the earth,  
I still believe there is beauty in the way the flower reaches  
for the sun, the way that it is humble enough to drink  
the rain as it pours on the earth. And so often an artist  
tries to capture the stillness of the mountains,  
when its very nature is due to unequivocal forces  
shifting the very ground we call steady. So we artists  
try to create something that almost pales in comparison  
to the natural world and we scientists try to mimic the  
systems found in nature. And despite the difference, all of us  
are turning the world in our hands searching for a masterpiece.